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OIA-20/78  
1 March 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Scientific Intelligence

SUBJECT : NFAC Analysis of Soviet Directed Energy Programs

*Km.*

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1. I understand that prior to the morning meeting on Friday you raised with Wayne three concerns that you have which stem from [REDACTED] draft paper on certain aspects of the Soviet directed energy program. As I understand it, these concerns are: (1) OSI does not agree with the key judgments in the [REDACTED] draft and "cannot live with them"; (2) that in the case of the [REDACTED] paper OIA should have restricted itself to measuring and describing facilities (This implies that, if OIA stuck to its proper role, it would not be writing key judgments and there would not be any problems.); (3) OIA withheld important information from OSI/OWI analysts. These last two concerns raise important organizational issues which require a response, but before doing so let me speak first about OSI's problems with the content of the key judgments of Larry's paper.

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2. Judging by the reaction, I suspect that there is some misunderstanding and confusion about the present status of Larry's paper. The paper right now is best described as an analyst's draft. It was intentionally made available to headquarter's analysts very early in the process so that we could elicit constructive comments, particularly with respect to the major analytical judgments. In fact, we proposed at the first meeting of the DE Coordinating Team that the paper be made a joint effort of the team by combining it with on-going efforts at headquarters, or that at least it be coordinated by the team and issued under its auspices. Both suggestions were, unfortunately, rejected. We anticipated reactions, but not from such a high level nor so devastating in character. (I have now read the key judgments and--for what its worth--agree that the main thrust is off the mark and that the tone does not adequately reflect the highly speculative nature of almost all the conclusions and judgments that can be made.)

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3. If I am not reading too much into your second concern, I fear that we have a fundamental disagreement. I reject the proposition that OIA analysts should limit their function to describing and measuring what they see in imagery. If we ask the imagery analyst to do less than he or she is capable of, that is exactly what we will get. In my view this would constitute a colossal waste of valuable and scarce analytical assets. No doubt the imagery analysts will make errors in their analysis, but the cost of insuring that they don't make any mistakes is just too high. I recognize that challenging the OIA analysts to exercise their intellects to the limits can cause some organizational/bureaucratic problems, but I think the problems can be overcome and we will end up with a better NFAC intelligence product in the process. One way is to channel the energy, which now gets consumed by analytical overreaching by OIA analysts and unproductive turf protecting by headquarters analysts, into interdisciplinary intelligence production efforts that result in joint products with joint attribution. Some of this has been done and I can't overstate what a constructive effect it has had. I am convinced that much more can be done along this line and that the payoff will be high, not only for OIA, but also for the quantity and quality of NFAC production generally.

4. The final concern--that is, that OIA has withheld information that should have been passed to headquarters analysts greatly disturbs me. I have talked to Larry and others and have been unable to establish any significant basis for such a concern. As far as I can see there was no intent to withhold information and nothing was asked for that was not provided if it could possibly be done. If there is some specific information that I am unaware of, please let me know. Such a situation would be absolutely intolerable to me and I would take steps to rectify it immediately. We cannot withhold information from headquarters components nor even appear to be doing so. Please help me sort this one out. We have all been living with the NSA problem too long to let it occur within NFAC.

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5. Since writing the above I have talked briefly with [REDACTED] 25X1A  
and [REDACTED] who were here this afternoon to go over the draft with [REDACTED]. It sounded to me like things are pretty well on track. In any event, I think it would be a good idea to get together at your convenience--perhaps along with Evan--to discuss the issues raised in paragraphs three and four.

[REDACTED] 25X1A  
Noel E. Firth  
Director  
Imagery Analysis

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